

March 27, 1963

U. S. INFORMATION AGENCY

FORMAL ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT AND IMPACT OF CASTRO-
COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA EFFORTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Before the October 1962 missile crisis, Castro's prestige and the appeal of the Cuban revolution to non-leftists in Latin America was already declining. As a result of the October crisis the general population in the hemisphere saw Cuba as a victim of international communism and as a contradiction of the people's basic belief in nonintervention and self-determination. The appeal of Castro-communism hit a new low.

By the end of 1962 local Communists had reassessed their particular situations. Although the Cuban case continued as an "ideal" for younger revolutionary members within the Communist movement in some countries, from the standpoint of propaganda, Castroism appeared to have lost most of its general appeal for purposes of proselytizing the uncommitted. Emphasis was placed on international Communist and local themes in lieu of earlier emphasis on Castro-Cuban themes. (For example: the poverty of the masses and the possibility of the immediate alleviation of their problems, nationalization, "national liberation," and the contrast between the peace-loving USSR and the imperialistic U.S. The Cuban example is generally played down in this recipe.) However there was still some variation in the climate for receptivity to the Cuban example, and in recognition of this the Communists vary their propaganda and tactics from one country to another.

The following summary is based on reports of the extent and impact of the Castro-Communist propaganda effort in some of the major countries of Latin America.

In Argentina, pro-Castro sentiment has been positively dispelled, and the efforts of the Cuban Solidarity Committee, the only active group dedicated to propagandizing Castroism, have been almost totally nullified by Argentine government control and immediate suppression of the group's publications when they appear.

In Brazil, where there are strong leftist-nationalist feelings, the Castro question is linked in Brazilian minds with Brazil's "independence" and its defense of the principles of "non-intervention" and "self-determination of peoples," and there has been almost total lack of opposition to the Cuban backed Continental Congress for Solidarity with Cuba. As the theme of the congress illustrates, Castro is more often used as an instance of North American imperialism than as an example for Brazil. Mirroring the split in the Brazilian Communist movement, however, old-guard Communist leaders who favor a gradual road to socialism by legal means have disassociated themselves from the Congress and its promoters, the young Castro-Communist actionists who believe that social and economic reforms can be achieved only by armed revolution.

Since the October crisis, Chilean Communist and leftist propaganda has generally devoted less space to Cuba, seldom giving unqualified support to Castro, but stressing specific social accomplishments. Overt Castro propaganda has continued at a low level of volume since the Chilean government's October crackdown on the entrance and distribution of such material by foreign governments.

In Colombia, also, Castroism has declined as a selling point for Communist propaganda. Even though finding non-Castro themes more effective in general, the Communist Party continues to propagandize Cuba, especially among students and labor unions under Communist leadership.

In Mexico, where the revolutionary tradition continues strong, there is still some Castro support in the mass media from hard-core Communists. But publicity on the real conditions in Cuba in the non-Communist press constitutes effective anti-Castro propaganda and has worn away the original image of a vigorous young socialist regime. The pro-Castro propaganda directed by the Cuban Embassy is offset by the anti-Castro propaganda of the Cuban refugees in Mexico. The educated upper middle class and conservative right are militantly anti-Castro.

In Venezuela, because of the existence of a revolutionary-leftist party, violence as advocated and promoted by Fidel Castro is being carried out by the Communist Party in alliance with the

revolutionary left. But the extent as well as impact of Castro propaganda is relatively limited in Venezuela. Castro-Communist propaganda is suppressed, and although Havana Radio's broadcast signal is strong and clear, short-wave listenership is limited. Also, its influence is balanced out to some degree by anti-Castro standard and short-wave broadcasts and other media.

With respect to specific segments of the population, no key group in any country in Latin America expresses significant support for the ideal of the Cuban revolution. The general population is anti-Castro and anti-Communist if it is informed, or public opinion may be generally uninformed and uninterested as in Brazil.

Government officials tend to be strongly anti-Castro, although in some countries lower officials in certain ministries appear to be sympathetic. On the parliamentary level Castroism is not an issue and is usually avoided as a political liability. Because of the highly nationalistic sentiments prevailing in Brazil, government officials there tend to resent what they consider the U.S. tendency to drag Brazil, unnecessarily, into the cold war. Thus consciously or unconsciously they give support to the Communist line. And in Chile, where most high government officials are anti-Castro, some still argue the importance of commercial and diplomatic relations with Cuba.

The military are actually aware of the suppression of the armed forces in Cuba and are almost solidly opposed to Castro.

It is unlikely that those elements of the Brazilian military who are responsive to ultranationalist appeals look to Castro as a leader. However, in Venezuela a dissident leftwing military minority is collaborating in the Castro-backed efforts to overthrow the government.

Castro has few admirers among intellectuals, although leftists abound in this group. Argentine and Brazilian intellectuals, often admitted socialists, do not manifest any overt, identifiable pro-Castro sentiment. Some Venezuelan intellectuals, on the other hand, are frankly pro-Castro.

Students, Fidel Castro's most vocal supporters, were particularly disillusioned by the October crisis pointing up Fidel Castro as a puppet. However, despite the decline of Castroism as a selling point, there continues to be Castro groups among students. In Brazil where there is a strong and increasing Bloc propaganda effort as well as support to the Communist-line National Student Organization (UNE), it is estimated that about half of the rank and file students are favorably disposed toward the UNE, while one-third like Castro. Socialism is popular, but the great majority reject the Communist label. Pro-Castro sentiment is reportedly strong among students in some areas of Chile and student propaganda continues to cite the Cuban revolution. In other countries the attitude of students other than hard-core Communists is decidedly anti-Castro.

where laborers are aware of Castro they are not now particularly interested in him and for the most part are averse to him. In Brazil, where Communists dominate the bulk of the urban labor movement, Castro plays an insignificant role in the efforts and results of the Communist leaders. Among Brazilian rural labor the ability of the Catholic Church to organize an apparently larger number of farm workers than the Communists casts doubt on the value of Communist efforts and the use of Castro as a propaganda selling point. In Chile and Colombia, however, despite recognition of the dimming lustre of Castroism, Communist leaders continue to propagandize the Cuban revolution as an example which, with variations, could point the way for other countries.

Campesinos, traditionally politically apathetic, have little awareness of Castro and Communism. This is true even in Brazil despite the Cuban-aided Ligas Camponesas (Peasant Leagues) of Francisco Juliao, which are moderate in scope and restricted mainly to the northeast.